DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 222 847 CG 016 330

TITLE	Implementing an Advisory Program in the Middle School. Georgia Comprehensive Guidance Series.
INSTITUTION	Missouri Univ., Columbia. Dept. of Counseling and Personnel Services.
SPONS AGENCY	Georgia State Dept. of Education, Atlanta. Office of Planning and Development.
PUB DATE	81
NOTE	45p.; For related documents, see ED 214 690, CG 016 240-250, and CG 016 329-334.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052) -- Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Educational Counseling; *Guidance Programs; Intermediate Grades; Interpersonal Relationship; *Program Development; School Counseling; *Student Needs; Student Teacher Relationship

ABSTRACT

This manual is designed to aid school personnel to establish a student advisory program in the middle school. The rationale, definition and benefits of the program are detailed in an initial section, including areas of responsibility and the role of principal, teachers, counselors, and special services staff. The second section presents a three-step developmental process for the implementation of the program, including: (1) establishing a need, identifying significant problems, creating a climate for change, and gaining support of the program's implementers; (2) planning for the implementation, establishing a steering committee and planning the program (scheduling, membership, location, parent and parent-student-advisor conferences); and (3) developing tools for the implementation of the program plan including structuring responsibilities, phasing-in the plan, and staff development activities. Appendix A provides descriptions of three different advisor programs. Appendix B contains a parent survey, an advisee survey and a parent conference letter. (MCF)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED222847

Implementing an Advisory Program in the Middle School

Georgia Comprehensive Guidance Series

GEORGIA COMPREHENSIVE GUIDANCE PROGRAM
GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING UNIT
STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30334

CG 016330

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☒ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

A. Maughan

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Charles McDaniel

State Superintendent of Schools

Developed by:

Career Development Projects
Department of Counseling and Personnel Services
College of Education
University of Missouri-Columbia

Project Director - Earl J. Moore

Pupil Personnel Services
Division of Educational Development
Office of Planning and Development
Georgia Department of Education
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

Charles McDaniel
State Superintendent of Schools
1981

PREFACE

This manual can be used by leadership personnel to aid in establishing an advisory program in the middle schools. Some additional ideas may be gathered from the Secondary School Advisement Manual. Staff development suggestions from that Manual may be especially helpful.

The Guidance Unit at the Georgia State Department of Education has resources that may be applicable to middle school advisement program support. Since many middle school advisement programs focus on group activities, the Middle School Seminars that are available through the Guidance Unit could be particularly useful.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface 1

Introduction 1

Advisement: What It Is and How It Works 5

Developing an Advisement Program for Your School 11

Stage 1 11

Stage 2 14

Stage 3 22

Appendix A: Descriptions of Middle School Advisement Programs . 31

An Individual Conference Approach 33

An I.G.E. Program 35

A Group/Individual Approach 37

Appendix B 39

Parent Survey 41

Advisee Survey 43

Parent Conference Letter 45

The early adolescent portrays many of the physical appearances of an adult. However, this is a very tender age. Today both parents frequently work and a large number of youngsters have single parents. In many instances, middle school children are more on their own than adolescents have been in past years. Some middle school youngsters supervise their siblings after school hours and have significant household responsibilities. Parents are tired after putting in a full day of work. Children in early adolescence need the undivided attention of an adult for at least a few minutes a day to reassure them that they are worthwhile, to listen to their problems and to point them in the direction of being responsible community members.

There is nothing more conducive to an individual's self-growth and development than a warm, accepting, nurturing significant other. This someone knows you, is interested in you, respects you, and is generally on your side. Parents are one group that serves this function. However, students spend a great portion of their time at school, away from their familial support systems. Can the middle school also provide each student with a significant and consistent relationship; one that goes beyond academic and disciplinary concerns; one that remains stable over a period of years?

This is not an easy task. Many teachers and counselors have been frustrated through the years in their attempts to meet the individual needs of each child. There are always children in each class that need special help for special problems, and there are those children who

are not learning as well as they could. Yet all children want their individual attention. There is never enough time for teachers to attend to all of these student needs on a consistent basis. Counselors are often frustrated in their attempts to reach children with developmental and personalized counseling activities.

This manual proposes one method for middle school teachers, counselors, and administrators to meet these needs of their students. The Advisory System can be a manageable and systematic way to deal with the frustrations of depersonalization in our schools.

Rationale

The Advisory System is based on this belief that satisfaction on the part of students, and parents and faculty will result more easily if every student in the middle school is able to relate personally, in a comfortable way, with at least one adult in the school. In order for this one-to-one relationship to exist, it is desirable to involve every faculty member in a program which includes all students. In most advisory programs, each teacher, counselor, administrator, and specialist acts as an advisor to a group of 15 to 20 students.

The advisor/advisee groups meet on a regular and frequent basis. During the meetings students learn more about themselves and each other through structured activities. They are taught those things that enhance self-concept and learning ability, things for which time is rarely allotted in the regular academic curriculum. There is also time allotted for each student to meet individually with their advisor. The individual advisor-student contact helps meet every student's need to have individual attention and the benefit of a relationship with a caring adult at school. Thus, within these advisement groups, the students are relating to each

other as responsible human beings; learning how to share and communicate. The advisor and student are relating to one another outside the realm of subject matter concepts. The faculty members are relating to each other on a personal level, sharing ideas about successfully dealing with their advisees. And finally, parents are relating to an individual in the school who knows more about their child than grades earned in a particular class.

Student advisement as presented here emphasizes the following:

1. The development of strategies that will assist the student in developing a strong self-concept.
2. The development of strategies that will assist the student in learning how to set goals, evaluate oneself, and take responsibility for his or her own life.
3. A strengthening of the student's peer group relationships.
4. A strengthening of the student's adult (teacher/parent) relationships.

The benefits of Advisement are numerous. Middle school students will benefit from the program in a number of ways. For one thing, they will come to better understand their own interests, strengths, and goals. Additionally, they will learn to develop a sense of ownership and responsibility for their own behaviors and decisions. They will begin to recognize teachers as individuals who can relate to them in life situations other than the traditional classroom structure. Most teachers already help students on a one-to-one basis, but many students are too shy to ask for assistance and do not realize that teachers really do want to help. Students will become less dependent on parents for goal setting but will have more respect for parents' opinions and experience. Parent-child power struggles should decrease.

Teachers, too, will benefit from an Advisement program. They will not only be able to more accurately identify student needs, problems, and desires, but they will also become more effective teachers by using skills gained through participation in the program. They often experience increased job satisfaction.

Counselors are needed and utilized more than ever in an Advisement program. In fact, in a typical school setting they may not be getting the opportunity to use all of the skills they have that could make them one of the most important and valuable members of the school staff. In an Advisement System, counselors become an essential resource to other staff members and students. More specifically, the counselor becomes a change agent. They become consultants in guidance for administrators, teachers, and parents, and serve as a resource in effective education and life skills development. Finally, in an Advisement program, counselors can focus on working individually with students who have personal and social problems.

An Advisement program will aid in providing a more positive climate for the whole school. Communication will improve among counselors, administrators, and teachers. Each staff member will recognize the interdependence of their different roles and will gain a new respect for each person's contribution to the process of helping students. In short, student advisement will provide a personalized education for its students and will result in increased feelings of belonging for both students and staff.

ADVISEMENT: WHAT IT IS AND HOW IT WORKS

The advisement program should encompass every person involved in the middle school. It affects the process of scheduling, the roles of the entire staff, the involvement of parents, and the learning of students. Though broad in scope, the advisory system is made up of logical components which, when clearly understood, are not difficult to actualize. It is necessary, then, to have a working knowledge of what the system is all about before concentrating on the development of skills to implement it. Included in this section is an overall presentation of the advisory system, including a description of the roles and responsibilities advisors will have.

Advisors

A central feature of a student advisement program is the use of the advisor concept. Advisors can be teachers, counselors, administrators, or special staff. Anyone on the school professional staff, with the desire to assist in meeting the holistic educational needs of students, should become advisors. The Areas of Responsibility that are central to an advisement program are described on the next page. Although the functions are not intended to be all-inclusive, they should be carefully considered, as they have proven to be important aspects of other well-functioning advisement programs.

Two points should be remembered. Those people serving as advisors continue to serve in their original roles as teachers, counselors, administrators, and special staff, but because of the impact of the advisement program, they will find their traditional roles modified.

Moreover, they will need training before being able to perform the recommended advisory functions. Staff development will be covered in more detail elsewhere in the manual.

Areas of Responsibility in Advisement

(1) Goal Setting and Evaluation. The advisor will be able to assist advisees in setting goals. The advisor will assess their needs, circumstances, and priorities.

(2) Study Habits. Advisees will be taught various techniques for effective studying and learning. This will include group advisement activities that focused on learning to concentrate, memorize, and relax, as well as specific methods for studying and learning.

(3) Parent Relations. The advisor will plan and participate in activities designed to increase parent involvement in the schooling process. This will involve ensuring frequent, positive contacts among the advisor, student, and parent.

(4) Career Exploration. Group and individual activities will be planned by the advisor to help students become aware of the world of work. Stereotypes will be confronted. Information gathering and personal processing will be stressed.

(5) Personal Development. This will involve assisting the advisees in areas such as self-exploration, development of creativity, assertiveness, social skills, etc. On an individual level it might involve helping a student handle a personal problem or dilemma in a productive way.

(6) Decision-Making Skills. This is a strand in all the components, but it also should be taught as a separate skill. Advisees are taught how to consciously apply decision-making strategies in their daily lives, as well as understand how others make decisions.

(7) Educational Planning. Advisees and advisors will work together in planning the advisee's class schedule and activities. Through group activities and individual advisement, the student will also begin to plan for long-range educational goals. Advisees will learn to feel ownership and responsibility for their own education.

(8) School and Community Issues. Some advisement activities can be planned, with a focus on learning the rights and responsibilities the advisees have in their school and community. This area will include group meetings to discuss current school-wide issues that might arise, such as vandalism, an upcoming school election or needs assessment.

The advisor and advisee may participate in activities selected from the eight Areas of Responsibility depending on the time of year and the particular circumstances of the advisee. Sometimes the activities will be formal; other times they may be a brief personal interaction. Frequently a group setting would be most appropriate and other times advisees would need individual time.

Although the eight Areas of Responsibility described earlier are common to all advisors, these same individuals (counselors, administrators, teachers and special staff) also perform functions unique to their roles on the school staff or in the school community. These special functions are described below.

Principal's Role

For some principals, student contact involves mainly "disciplinary" action with resulting negative feelings. The advisement program does not guarantee the principal freedom from that disheartening task, but personalized contact and program planning may increase student motivation and involvement in the school. It is not realistic to claim that the principal will never have "discipline" problems. An advisory system will help prevent some of these problems and will aid in dealing with others.

The advisory system needs the principal to function as an advisor. The principal will thus also have the opportunity for full participation in helping relationships. The principal's participation will accent the importance of advisement for the other advisors. As an advisor, the principal needs to sustain participation with enthusiasm. This is an important factor in long-term maintenance of the program. Also, as an advisor, the principal develops an increased sensitivity to the problems of advisement. His or her participation allows the problems of advisement to be experienced in a firsthand manner. This involvement will enhance the feeling of togetherness on the faculty.

Can an advisory system exist without the principal participating as one of the advisors? Yes, it can. However, it may be difficult to create a positive and understanding attitude among the staff. Each staff member has other responsibilities and other time demands. All staff could possibly treat advisement as an ancillary task. Advisement should be treated as an important responsibility by all staff members.

A school environment should say to all within: "You are trusted." Principals can create this feeling. It includes confidence in the advisement program, the staff, the students, and one's self. With this confidence, the principal will be able to foster the proper climate for an advisement program.

Teacher's Role

Being an advisor in the advisory system makes it possible to give a few individual students personalized care and attention. Usually an advisor has 15 - 20 advisees for all of their middle school years. The student chooses an advisor in one of several ways. The choice may be based on curriculum or out-of-school interests of the advisor. The choice may be an advisor the student already knows. It may be that a group of students choose the same advisor so they can be together.

The advisor is given the permanent cumulative records of their advisees. This allows for easy access to the student files during the advisor-advisee meetings. In some schools, the folders are kept in an Advisement Center where the advisor-advisee meetings are held.

Counselor's Role

The counselor's role in the middle school which uses the advisory system includes:

- providing advisors with backup support by dealing with crisis-oriented referrals.

- administering and interpreting tests along with the other advisors.
- helping advisors develop skills in providing students with educational/ vocational information.
- scheduling and student registration of 15 - 20 advisees.
- student record upkeep of 15 - 20 advisees.
- developing human development and growth group activities.
- helping advisors develop skills in active listening, group dynamics, parent conferencing, and conflict resolution.

Traditionally, the counselor has been responsible for as many as several hundred students in the school. Interaction between student and counselor has been limited to brief encounters during registration times or painful encounters during problematic times. Interaction between teacher and counselor has been limited to faculty meetings, workshops, and brief consultations regarding "problem" students. With an advisement program in operation, personal caring becomes basic in the school where there is equal involvement on the part of every faculty member and every student. The counselor becomes a member of a team whose overall role includes meeting student needs, such as:

- receiving personal attention.
- learning how to assess oneself and set goals.
- entering into meaningful dialogue with parents and teachers.
- getting to know an adult in the school.
- experiencing daily emotional growth.
- developing decision-making skills.

At first glance it may well appear to the counselor that implementation of the advisory system would serve only to minimize his or her function in the middle school. If suddenly every faculty member is called upon to advise a small group of students, how then does the counselor's special talent come into play?

The counselor functioning in a program of advisement serves as a prime resource for both advisors and students. Freed from an abundance of paper work and integrated into the mainstream of school life, the counselor is finally able to utilize his or her talents and training. The counselor will continue to fulfill many of the traditional roles, such as crisis counseling, but the advisory system frees the counselor to deliver a higher level of professional service. An advisement program will serve to enhance the work of the counselor.

Special Staff's Role

In middle school advisement programs it is necessary to utilize the entire professional staff to act as advisors. This is important because it lowers the advisor/advisee ratio to an acceptable and manageable number. Aside from this important reason, it is only appropriate to involve special education teachers, nurses, librarians, and other professionals in advisement if advisement is to be a "total school effort."

The roles of the school nurse, librarian, speech pathologist, and reading specialist would not differ from the role a teacher-advisor plays. Special education teachers may wish to have special education students as their advisees, since they could probably provide better advisement to this group than others could. This is not always the case. In many schools, special education teachers advise children like any other classroom teacher. Involvement on the part of the special staff is a critical component to a successful advisory system in the middle school.

DEVELOPING AN ADVISEMENT PROGRAM FOR YOUR SCHOOL

The establishment of an advisement program must be an ongoing developmental process carried out by those who are involved in the implementation of the program. Each program will be a unique creation of the persons involved. Although there are common areas on which most advisement programs focus, there are no particular content, structure, or tasks common to all advisory systems.

The developing and implementing of an advisement program necessitates going through a systematic, stage by stage process. Experience and research indicate that four stages are common in the establishment of an advisement program:

1. Establishing a need for an advisement program.
2. Planning for the implementation of an advisement program.
3. Managing and implementing the advisement program.
4. Evaluating and adjusting the advisement program.

Stage 1: Establishing a Need

Schools will derive many benefits by implementing an advisement program. However, it is imperative that local school districts themselves assess and establish their own need. It is only through establishing a need and a sense of ownership that a commitment will evolve.

An established advisory system has an impact on more than just the advisors and advisees. The school board, the administration, students, parents, and all school staff are an integral part. So it is logical to survey the needs of all these individuals and groups. Encouraging their input serves two very important functions. First, it encourages involvement and commitment. Secondly, it provides a broad spectrum of information that can assist in adapting the advisory system to meet the needs of the local school district.

The activities for this stage should include the following:

- Identifying significant problems that might be resolved by an advisement program
- Creating a climate conducive to change
- Gaining ownership and building support for advisement by those who must implement the program

Significant Problems. Activities should be conducted at a school site that assists in identifying significant problems that the advisement program might address. These activities should be participative in nature. One way to proceed would be to hold a meeting of interested staff to identify problems in the school that need resolution. Perhaps some of the problems identified would include such things as poor school attendance, low student morale, lack of student interest. It might be determined that an advisement program would be one strategy by which to address these problems. It should be emphasized here that the identified problems should be clarified to the point that anyone not attending the meeting would understand the meaning of the identified problems. Clear statements of the problems could then be written in such a way that the significant ones are emphasized.

An additional approach to the identifying of problems would be through a formalized system of needs assessment. In fact, the decision to conduct such an assessment is typically an outgrowth of the kind of planning session described above. The needs assessment would request input from administrators, teachers, and students regarding the outcomes they would desire as a result of an educational program.

Creating a Climate. Once problems have been identified that might be addressed by an advisement program, the planning group must create a climate

conducive to change. One of the greatest obstacles to this task is fear--fear on the part of those people affected by change. People will want answers to such questions as, How will I fit into this program? How will my role change? What are the new tasks I must do? These are some of the concerns that are threatening to staff.

People need time to determine the relevance of advisement to the problems identified by the school. Activities need to be designed that will help those affected by an advisement program to recognize the personal relevancy of the program. Once that relevancy is established, individuals will more eagerly participate.

Here communication is the key. To help staff overcome their fear of change and recognize the relevancy of the program, there must be a steady flow of communication between program developers and affected personnel. It will be important, of course, to keep a close liaison with those in charge (e.g., the principal). In addition, it will be important to communicate clearly information about advisement to those members of the staff, student body, and community who are receptive to the program.

Gaining Ownership and Building Support. Cooperation and commitment are key words in this stage of the process; both can be acquired through shared decision making. Rather than using majority rule, some form of consensus is usually the best decision-making strategy. In consensus, a group considers problems one at a time, with time allowed for definition of each problem and for the generation of alternatives and debate. In consensus, all ideas of participants are accepted and used toward the creation of a solution (advisement, for example); then the solution is submitted to the consensus test question: "Given the present circumstances, is there anyone here who cannot support this? For a designated time (one month, one year, etc.)?" Additional discussion, debate,

and often revision of the solution in question are conducted until the group as a whole can accept or support the decision. The "We Agree" process in the Individual Guided Education Programs (IGE) is an example of a consensus activity and would be appropriate for gaining ownership.

Support is also established by securing commitment of the school leadership team. The principal is a key person from whom the proponents of advisement must gain approval. School staffs which have a principal as a member of the in-service team can plan and implement significantly more elements presented in training than schools which have no principal involved. The school site council in a school-improvement school is another leadership group from whom support should be secured.

Here again clear communication is essential. To secure commitment and ownership from a staff, a team should be identified to facilitate an ongoing dialogue between the program developers and the staff and students. This group should develop a system to distribute information and receive reactions from the school community before decisions are made. This group also forms the core of people who work on the planning, implementation, and management stages of the program.

Stage 2: Planning for the Implementation

Systematic planning helps individuals adapt more readily to change. Establishing an advisement program is a change process. The planning stage is continuous throughout the duration of the program. Its importance lies not in the specifics of the program but in the process itself.

A Steering Committee. In order to carry out the planning responsibility for an existing school program, there needs to be an initial core group of individuals whose responsibilities will include such things as devising the

program components and defining the roles of faculty (advisors) and students (advisees). This core committee would also have the capacity to make decisions and institute plans for the implementation of these decisions. The steering committee would attend to each of the component areas: scheduling, advisors (faculty involvement and responsibility), advisor-advisee membership, parent conferences and staff development.

Another factor for consideration by the committee would be communication. How will the system be communicated through the school? Will a handbook be devised? If so, how; by whom? Will there be letters to parents and students announcing the new program?

In forming the steering committee, some of the following issues need to be decided upon:

- How large should this steering committee be?
- Who should serve on it?
- How are these members to be selected?
- What are some responsibilities this core committee should have?
- When should they first assemble?
- What powers need to be accorded to this group?
- Are there any problems we can anticipate in setting up this committee?
- What advantages are there to having a core group active in instituting the advisory program in your school?

Part of the task of the steering committee might also be to form other committees and assign responsibilities within the local school system. The steering committee would also have a major role in anticipating opposition and problems.

Planning the Program

An advisement program must be adapted to the organizational structure of the local school district. There are some common concerns encountered in every school system regardless of the community. As the organizational alternatives are examined to meet the needs of the advisement program and other concerns of the local district, the implications for using each approach should be understood.

There is a constant danger of sacrificing the basic purpose of the advisement program for the sake of operational efficiency and control. Six critical organizational aspects are considered during this part of the manual. Alternatives and differing perspectives are explored for each organizational aspect.

Scheduling. It is important to keep the basic purpose of an individual development system in focus when organizing the program. It is possible for an "advisory type" system to be oriented toward school system efficiency rather than personalizing student learning. While the system should be reasonably efficient, an overconcern for efficiency can distort the purpose. It is possible to have an individual advisory system and not significantly increase individualized student contact and involvement. A "warmed over" homeroom approach wherein the student is only seen in a group and the goals are limited to mainly administrative concerns, such as class scheduling, record keeping, and announcements, will probably offer little personalized development. While scheduling may be one responsibility of the advisor and group meetings may be an appropriate method for discussion and efficient processing, the primary focus should always be the facilitation of individual student development.

Advisement time can be scheduled in one of two ways. The first is to set aside a block of time (1 - 2 hours) on the same day each week. The meeting

time would remain the same each week if students were in self-contained classrooms. If the school is departmentalized, the time could be changed weekly so that students would not miss the same class each week. This block of time would be used for both individual conferences and group activities.

Extending homeroom three days each week is another way to schedule advisement activities. Two days might be used primarily for group activities and the third for individual contact. Students could either be assigned to their advisors for homeroom or else leave their regular homeroom on the advisement days to meet with their group in the scheduled place.

A different way of planning for advisor/advisee meetings might work better for your school. The important thing is that students can count on regular and consistent contact, both on an individual and group basis.

Time also needs to be made for Advisory Team meetings. Teams should meet, at the very least, twice a month. Some suggestions are: extending regular staff meetings or occasionally substituting team meetings for a regular staffing; after school; during lunch periods; releasing students early. Again, the critical element for success is to have consistent and regular meetings. Advisors will need support and training and a chance to consult with one another.

Advisor-Advisee Membership. An advisory group consists of one advisor (faculty/staff member) and about fifteen advisees (students). Students are assigned to an advisory group according to a random-choice method of selection. Those students who have preferences list them, and this is honored to the extent possible. Students who have not indicated a preference are assigned on a random basis. An advisor stays with his or her same group of advisees throughout their years at the middle school.

Although each advisory group works together as a unit throughout this time,

there are occasional changes. During a student's first year in advisement, he or she may not establish adequate rapport with the advisor and thus may request a change. Because advisors and advisees are human, it is unrealistic to believe they always can and will be compatible in their assigned groups. There must be some flexibility to allow for change during the first year of getting to know one another.

In the middle school, advisory groups should not be composed of students all of whom are in the same year. It would be easy to slip into a routine of having the sixth grade teacher advise sixth grade students, changing each year to take on the new sixth graders as advisees. Having students of varying ages in each advisement group has several advantages: diversity is more conducive to breaking out of traditional student-teacher roles; students are able to benefit from relationships with other adults in the school; and advisees would be learning to communicate and interact with children of different ages.

Where to Have Advisement. A regular classroom would be adequate for advisement meetings to take place. When possible, the following criteria should be met:

- The room should be large enough to allow the group to split into smaller groups and also have ample room for some gross motor activity.
- There should be one or two round tables.
- There should be some sort of semi-private area. (A screen or bookshelf could be used to create this.)
- The room should have a small file cabinet that could be used to hold files and materials pertinent to advisement.
- The same room should be available to the same advisement group so that their meetings are regularly occurring in the same place.

Parent Conferences. Unfortunately, parents are most frequently called in to take an active part in the life of their youngster at school during report

card time or when a crisis or problem occurs. Parents are not usually called to take part in sharing positive things. Frequently, students in the middle school have many teachers, making it difficult for a curious or interested parent to know whom to call about what. This somewhat typical plight of the parents of middle school students is one of the basic concerns of advisors.

Parent contact involves communication between a student's advisor and his or her parent(s). This communication is maintained in three ways:

1. Parent-student-advisor conferences
2. Telephone contacts
3. Informal gatherings

Parent-Student-Advisor Conferences. Conferences are conducted at least once each term when new schedules are being planned. However, advisors should arrange for more frequent conferences in order that some are held purely for positive feedback to the parent(s). Because the conferences held with the student and his or her advisor and parent(s) are held for the purpose of planning and evaluating the student's progress, it is important to plan the conferences carefully. The whole conference process can be dealt with most efficiently by dividing it into four phases:

1. Pre-planning. Prepare several worksheets for the advisee to fill out before the conference takes place. These items will help the student take more control of the conference, e.g., what is the best thing that has happened to you at school during the last month? List your classes and/or activities. Name some new ideas or skills that you have learned and that you have enjoyed for each class. On another worksheet, provide the advisee with an opportunity to help determine a conference agenda, e.g., list at least five things that you think

your parents would be interested in discussing in a three-way conference with you and your advisor.

Forms should also be sent to the advisee's teacher or teachers to make comments on the student's learning program, progress, needs, and interests.

Before the actual meeting, organize a conference format and go over it with the advisee. Also, list some suggestions for conducting a meaningful conference. (Don't attack teachers. Listen to parents, etc.)

A final pre-planning step is to utilize the process of role playing and let several or all of your advisees work in groups of three. Each student should assume the role of advisee, that of parent, and finally that of advisor during brief role-play sessions. This will help students experience all facets of the parent-student-advisor conference.

2. Making the appointment. Contact the parent(s) by phone and arrange for the conference to be held at a time which will be convenient for all involved. Holding the conference during the school day will give the parent(s) an opportunity to see the school in operation.

3. Conducting the conference. It is important that the conference be a time during which the student and his or her parent(s) reach some honest understanding of each other's expectations and plans. The advisor should enter into the conference as a resource person who is able to explain what is involved in school programs, what the student might expect from various programs, and how different programs will enable the student to reach certain goals. The conference is primarily a time of dialogue between student and parent(s), not a session during which the advisor reports to the parent(s) about the student's grades and behavior.

4. Writing the conference report. Following the conference, the advisor should write a report which will then be included in the advisee's permanent records. This report should be objective and to the point. It will be helpful to both the advisor and the advisee in preparing for future conferences.

Telephone Contacts. This is a method of keeping in frequent touch with an advisee's parent(s). Calls should be made by the advisor on a regular basis. Sometimes the call will be made merely to say "hello." It is important to keep in mind the fact that parents do have questions and concerns, but in the past they have not had any contact in the school (unless they happen to have a friend on the staff). Therefore, parents are not accustomed to talking over concerns as they come up. By making yourself available on the phone from time to time, you will give parents a chance to talk with someone at the school in a non-threatening way.

When an advisee enjoys some success (even if the success may, to most observers, appear insignificant), his or her advisor should make a mental note and remember to call the advisee's parent(s). Such "sunshine calls" are so significant that we wonder why they have not always been required. Parents deserve the opportunity of sharing in their children's golden moments, big and small.

Informal Gatherings. These events afford advisors and parents the chance to get to know each other as human beings. This being the case, it is important to remember that there are a significant number of human beings who do not seek out, nor do they enjoy, a great number of friendships outside of their family circle. Care must be taken to avoid pushing parents who may not want to take part in arranged informal gatherings. On the other hand, care must also be taken

in determining the type of gatherings that would be successful in drawing parents who don't otherwise participate in school functions but aren't necessarily averse to doing so. In other words, Advisement Teams should take the time to discuss and examine the temperament of the community in which the school is situated. On the basis of the social characteristics of the community, informal gatherings (Sunday teas, small discussion groups, Saturday afternoon fairs, etc.) can be planned that would appeal to the parents.

Stage 3: Managing and Implementing

The planning activities set direction and clarify issues pertinent to advisement. The next task is to manage and implement the plan. Tools for this stage include the following:

1. An organizational structure for responsibility
2. A phase-in plan for advisement
3. A staff development program for advisors

Structure for Responsibility. An organizational structure delineating the individual responsibilities for various aspects of implementation is basic to advisement program initiation and survival. For example, school site administration needs to exert strong pressure to accomplish the results and support the direction of the advisement plan developed during the planning stage. Counselors need to provide leadership and responsibility for the implementation of the advisement program. The district office should provide support for development of the planning staff (release time, etc.) and assist in the identification of materials to be used in the program.

The support team provides advisors the opportunity to share experiences, concerns, and information for the constant maintenance and re-evaluation of the program.

These advisor support teams are often composed of staff from various departments, with a counselor serving as facilitator and consultant. The teams meet regularly and staff development activities may occur at such meetings. For those advisors trying on a new role with trepidation, the support group can be a source of strength, security, and self-confidence.

Teams. An important aspect of the advisement process is the development, maintenance, and nurturance of teams. A team is a group of from 6 to 12 advisors who represent a cross-section of subject areas, age, experience, and philosophies. The team functions as a support system for advisors. Through the team approach, individual advisors are no longer working in isolation. Rather, they provide for themselves a climate of support and a structure for sharing which aids them in carrying out their advisement responsibilities.

Advisors, advisees and the school community all benefit from a team approach. Individual advisors can increase their advisement skill and knowledge through a deliberate, sustained interaction with other advisors. Also, advisor concerns and needs can be more effectively communicated to curriculum planning groups, the advisement steering committee, and other decision-making bodies. Through teams, teachers get to know each other well. They can set common goals and make commitments for improvements. Teams can also be a vehicle for staff development and inservice.

Advisees benefit from access to the increased level of skills and knowledge their advisors have available to them, through other team members. Advisees will receive assistance that is better attuned to the yearly pattern of student needs. The increased commitment and availability of advisors will provide advisees with consistent opportunities for interaction.

The school community, too, benefits from team advisement in that it can

become a means for carrying out school-wide goals. Team members who are working together in a climate of trust provide a rapport for a comfortable, positive, growth-directed school. Through advisement teams, a channel of communication is established which can effectively reach every member of the staff. There are different ways to organize teams. Presented here are three possible approaches and a critique of each.

1. Selected. In this team approach, leaders are chosen because they possess leadership skills or potential leadership skills. The team consists of from 6 to 12 advisors from diverse backgrounds and functions as a support system. The team leaders stay leaders for an extended period of time and have ongoing leadership training and team leader meetings to support them.

Team leaders have a critical role in the functioning of this team. They see to it that the team meets regularly and that the agenda meets the needs of the group. They facilitate exchange of ideas, information, and concerns among team members. They are central in maintaining positive attitudes in individuals and the group.

A key function of this team leader is to provide inservice training and staff development for their team. Thus, they need to be able to evaluate inservice needs and either locate an appropriate resource or provide the training themselves.

This model is an excellent one. It is an approach that schools should aim for. Much time, however, is required from team leaders, and the issue of remuneration is sometimes problematic. Each school would need to resolve that issue individually.

2. Elected. This approach differs from the first in that 6 to 12 advisors form a team and then elect a leader from their group. Another difference is that the leader serves a one-year term and then a new leader is elected from the team.

Team leaders meet to provide each other with support, but no formal leadership training is provided.

The leaders have much the same role as was described in the previous model. The major difference is that these leaders would for the most part arrange for inservice training instead of actually providing it themselves. They would, however, need to be able to assess team inservice needs; contact appropriate community resources to provide inservice; become aware of resources in the school community (including parents); and arrange special training for new advisors.

Two important disadvantages of this team concept are that: 1) the leaders do not get formal leadership training, and 2) the training they do acquire through experience "goes to waste" as their term ends at the end of a year. There is also a disadvantage in having to rely primarily on outside resources for inservice.

3. Committee. There are no distinct leaders in this third team model. The team members divide the responsibilities and form committees to handle them. Each committee then selects a chairperson to be in charge. Chairpersons and committees can change as suits the needs of the team and individual team members. As in the other two approaches, the purpose of the team is to provide support and inservice training for advisors.

All team members share in the responsibility of maintaining enthusiasm and commitment; scheduling and attending team meetings; and planning an agenda. Committee chairpersons are responsible for evaluating the inservice and staff development needs in their area and for contacting the appropriate resources. The chairpersons also must provide or arrange for training for new advisors.

This is a very democratic approach to teams, but has the disadvantage of having no distinct leader, i.e., no one person to be accountable for the team's activities. This sometimes leads to confusion and chaos. Also, as in the second

team model, outsiders would have to provide the majority of inservice training, as no one team person is learning leadership skills.

Phase-in for Advisement. One way to phase in advisement is to conduct a pilot program on a school site or school-wide in a district implementation plan. The important thing to remember is that those who are not in the program should be adequately informed as to how the pilot is going.

Goal Setting. The process of goal setting is an integral concept in the middle school advisory system. The ability to set educational and personal goals and evaluate progress toward those goals is an important habit for middle school students to develop. Students who are able to take an active part in planning are much more likely to take responsibility for their own behavior and feel a sense of ownership for their education.

It is beneficial for parents, too, to be included in their children's goal setting activities. Parents have a need and a right to be proactively involved in educational and personal planning for their sons and daughters. When they know some specific things their youngsters are striving for, it is easier for them to be helpful and to encourage small steps.

Advisors are central in helping their advisees acquire the necessary skills involved in setting goals. Individual and group activities would both facilitate this. Because of the importance of goal setting in middle school advisement programs, it is essential that adequate staff training in this area be provided during the early stages of implementation. See the following page for Parent-Student-Teacher Contract.

Getting Started. As the time approaches to implement advisement, advisors will need to get ready for their new advisees and the beginning of a new adventure.

Parent-Student-Teacher Contract

A. First Goal Setting Conference:

1. Parent, student, and teacher have input on deciding a few important goals, both long and short-range, during required parent conferences.
2. Discuss what specific behaviors are necessary to accomplish goals.
3. Set up a time period for evaluating progress.
4. Parent, student, and teacher sign contract.

B. Continuing Goal Setting Conferences:

1. Student, teacher, and parent should have input on deciding what goals should be worked on during the next time period. (These may or may not be in a parent conference.)
2. Discontinue any goals that have been reached.
3. Continue working on goals not reached. Evaluate past behaviors used to try to reach goal. Eliminate unseccessful activities and continue ones that result in progress. Add any additional behaviors that could help accomplish goal.
4. Establish new goals to be reached during the next time period.
5. Student, parent, and teacher sign contract.

C. Processes for Continuing Goal Setting:

1. Individual parent, student, and teacher conferences are ideal, and, if time is available, should be held. In these cases, the steps in the first goal setting conference could be repeated.
2. Individual student and teacher conferences would also follow the first conference procedure. The parent and student could evaluate goals and make new ones, either before or after student-teacher conference.
3. Large group goal setting periods, although not ideal, can allow students, teachers, and parents to have input on evaluating original goals and making new ones.

Relating to students on a personal level as an advisor sometimes takes practice. As experience is gained, though, advisors quickly learn how to take cues from an advisee about what he/she needs at any given time: help in program planning, a positive focus session, short-range goal setting, or individual attention. This is best. But for those who need a more specific plan to get started, here is a possible sequence.

1. Before the school year starts, contact all your new advisees by letter or phone. Introduce yourself, express your eagerness to meet them, and if necessary, explain what advisement is.

2. Set up a time to meet your advisees who are new to your school to show them around and give reassurance.

3. Familiarize yourself with the school history of each child you will be advising.

4. At your first group advisement meeting, tell your advisees something about yourself; where you come from, what you teach, what your interests are, what you will be working on together. Ask advisees to tell something about themselves.

5. Meet individually with each advisee. Ask them what they would like to do in advisement, or what they need help with.

6. Call each parent after you have met with their child. Explain who you are and what advisement is.

Staff Development. In order to meet the needs of individual students, the individual advisory system calls for a strong program of continuing staff development. Plans for this program should be made in light of the following considerations:

1. Rationale

2. Content

3. Structure

Rationale. The area of rationale deals with the question, Why should there be ongoing staff development in the advisory system? There are two major reasons.

The first reason is that the advisors' responsibilities involve mastering and teaching new skills. Examples of these would be goal setting and decision making skills. Advisor responsibilities also include internalizing new and changing information, as in the case of awareness of the total range of school offerings. This information will be used by the advisor to help his or her advisees with their immediate and long-range program planning. Systematic staff development will help advisors to share their knowledge with one another, thus making efficient use of teacher time and skills.

For teachers to share information, they must get together. Communication, then, is the other major reason to plan for continuing staff development in the individual advisory system.

Content. The area of content deals with the question, What are the topics of the staff development or inservice meetings? This will vary according to the needs of the group. The basic topics of the staff development very likely will be the eight areas of advisor responsibility: goal setting and evaluation, study habits, parent relations, career exploration, personal development, decision making skills, educational planning, and school and community issues. The staff development program also must provide for communication within advisement teams and between advisement teams.

Structure. The area of structure deals with the question, How and when does staff development occur? There are no hard-and-fast rules, but many possibilities exist. Remember, the goal of a vital staff development program is to help the advisors meet the needs of their advisees. It is obvious that staff development occurs informally as advisors share with one another during the advisement team meetings.

The team, however, might very well take on a more formal and central role in providing staff development and inservice. At times there will also be a need for every faculty member to receive the same information. Thus, it is probable that there will be all-faculty inservice meetings attended by everyone. These may occur during workshop weeks, after school, or on Saturdays. The key to valuable inservice is continuing development of advisors which enables them to meet the needs of each individual advisee.

APPENDIX A

Descriptions of Middle School Advisement Programs

AN INDIVIDUAL CONFERENCE APPROACH

The intention of this advisor-advisee program is to help students with their school-related activities and to make teacher efforts more effective. Conferences with each student are expected to last approximately 15 minutes. This will establish the homeroom teacher as an individual who can be of help to the student on a regular basis. The focus of this program is to identify areas of conflict that tend to slow down overall student progress. For this program to succeed, the cooperation and understanding of the special area teachers and the total cooperation of the faculty is needed. The specific goals of the advisement program are as follows:

1. Become aware of each student as an individual.
   - Help students be aware of self-interests so they may become actively involved in school activities.
   - Be a sounding board for the student and provide feedback.
   - Determine if student needs to be referred to the nurse, counselor, or principal.
   - Provide the student with an opportunity to discuss the rights and wrongs of our school and specify as long as it does not become a total gripe session.
   - Provide the student with an opportunity to discuss his responsibilities in society.
   - Assure students of confidentiality:

     Unless student statement will affect his actions in class.
     Unless student's health is affected.
     Unless discussion with other teachers will help the student.

2. Help the student identify his educational goals.
   - Discuss the purposes of the advisor-advisee program.
   - Discuss academic progress and performance:

     Self-evaluation--Is the student's potential being reached?
     Future goal setting.

- To gain an understanding of each student's backgrounds to see how it may affect his actions at school.
- Inquire if the student needs help in developing study habits.
- Inquire if the student is able to make friends.

The advisor should not feel pressure to make the conference last the entire 15 minutes. The goal is to improve communication between student and teacher and also to help teachers in each unit to have a better understanding of the student. It is the student's choice of whether or not to discuss personal needs. The student may be referred to the counselor. The counselor works closely with the advisors. The counselor meets periodically with each unit to see how the program is progressing and to discuss student referrals' needs. The counselor works with students who the advisor feels need more help than the advisor can provide during one conference, (e.g., school problems, motivation, future high school courses, or personal problems). The counselor informs advisors about follow-up activities with these students.

The cooperation of the special area teachers is of utmost importance in planning for individual student conferences. The homeroom teacher and the special area teacher must work out a suitable time for student conferences. The special area teacher is informed at least one week in advance that the student is going to be released. Each student should miss about 15 minutes of one class, one time a year. The most needy students are often selected for an advisor's first conferences. All students will be met with during the school year.

AN I.G.E. PROGRAM

In this Individually Guided Education (I.G.E.) school, an attempt is made to personalize the learning experience as much as possible to each student's needs and interests. One of the unique features of an I.G.E. school is the advisement program. Each student works with an adult advisor who takes a personal interest in that child. The advisor could be a classroom teacher or other faculty member who meets weekly with their advisees. The advisement activities include such things as goal setting, program planning, and self-assessment.

The main objective is to have every student feel that at least one adult in school really cares for him or her. An advisor has a genuine interest in the welfare of the student and is a person who takes time to listen. The specific goals of the advisement program are as follows:

1. The classroom teacher assists in course selections, schedule conflicts, and long-range planning. The special personnel teacher will also assist when possible. (Program Planning)

2. The advisor assists students in understanding of self: behavior, effort, and performance. (Self-Assessment)

3. The advisor provides activities to develop decision-making skills, value clarification, interpersonal relationships. (Human Relationship)

4. The advisor provides exploration into the world of work and leisure. (Life and Career Awareness)

A variety of activities have been included in the advisement program. It was decided that out-of-school activities such as skating and bowling should be eliminated from the advisement program. However, field trips and films that can be related to advisement are acceptable.

Members of the special I.G.E. team will write their own criteria for accepting advisees. This criteria should be simple enough for the students to understand. The classroom teachers go over the criteria with their students in the homerooms. Following the presentation students interested in having a member of the special team as an advisor is asked to write a paragraph giving their reasons for choosing that teacher. These paragraphs are given to that special teacher and they select their advisees.

Advisors keep folders on all of their advisees. Special personnel return these folders to the homeroom teachers at the end of the year.

Special teachers accepting advisees are involved as much as possible in the planning and carrying out of at least one parent/student/teacher conference involving their advisees each year.

A file is kept in a central location (library) containing advisement material. This file is supplied with material used by the district, as well as materials from teams, individual teachers, and the school counselor.

A GROUP/INDIVIDUAL APPROACH

This advisor-advisee program is a primary prevention program with direct services to children. In this program, every certified person on the staff is responsible for an advisor group. Therefore, there is a small number of students in each group. All groups meet first thing in the morning in a homeroom setting for a general "check in." Three mornings a week students stay in their homeroom with their advisor for a thirty-five minute period. On two of these mornings, group meetings take place. In these group meetings, values clarification, decision making, and goal setting activities take place. The advisor does not impose their value system on the students, but merely makes them aware of their values and exposes them to areas of human relations in which they can make decisions and set goals for their own behavior. The third morning meeting is devoted to a personal conference with each student. The advisor checks with the students to see if they are having a good week and to see "how things are going." The advisor assures the students that they will be there to help them in any way possible.

When a teacher/advisor runs into a problem with a student that requires more than a reassuring word or a talk with a teacher, the student may be afraid to ask for help, so a referral is made to the school counselor. The student then receives the help that they need from a trained professional. The program is preventive because the student has a person to whom they can turn for help and attention before a serious problem develops. Much aggressive classroom behavior is avoided because there is a "sounding board" for the student. The student knows there is care and concern. Many serious behavior problems are avoided because early referrals for help can be made before the student gets into trouble with which they cannot cope.

Advisor groups consist of thirteen advisees and one teacher advisor. The advisees in each group are composed of students in sixth, seventh, and eighth grade. By having students of three grade levels mixed in their advisor groups, the barrier of class lines begins to diminish and students treat one another as equals.

Students have the choice at the end of the school year to pick their advisor for the following year. This ensures the student will be placed with an adult with whom they can relate.

APPENDIX B

1. Parent Survey
2. Advisee Survey
3. Parent Conference Letter

PARENT SURVEY

1. One thing I still don't understand about this school's program is _____

_____

_____

2. I do have a concern about homework. _____

_____

3. One thing I wonder about my child's behavior in school is _____

_____

_____

4. In the area of basic skills (reading, language, and math), I wonder _____

_____

5. One aspect of my son's/daughter's character that I wish the school understood better is _____

_____

6. I'd like to hear about the strengths the school sees in my child in the area(s) of _____

_____

7. I wish I had better information about _____

_____

8. I could help my child more if _____

_____

9. Please list other topics you wish to discuss.

_____

_____

_____

_____ _____

ADVISEE SURVEY

1. One good thing that happened to me this semester that I hope my advisor will tell my parents about is _____

_____

_____

2. I think my advisor knows how much I've progressed in _____

_____

3. _____ is the area I've worked the hardest in this semester.

4. One class in which the teacher really understands me is _____

_____

5. I hope my parents and my advisor get a chance to talk about _____

_____

_____

6. I wish my advisor would explain to my parents about _____

_____

7. I wish my parents would explain to my advisor about _____

_____

_____

8. I'd like my parents' help with _____

_____

_____

9. One thing that worries me about parents talking to my advisor is _____

_____

_____

10. Other. _____

_____

Dear Parents,

I believe the most effective way to plan a child's school experience is through a conference with the student, parents, and teacher. It is my feeling that by fifth or sixth grade a child should begin to be aware of his or her involvement and responsibility in the daily educational activities. Therefore, I am asking your child to meet with us this year.

This conference will provide an opportunity for all of us to discuss goals for this year based on your child's ability and interests, your expectations, and my observations as I work with your child in class. You will also receive the first quarterly Progress Reports for each subject area in which your child is working.

Prior to the conference, a short questionnaire will be sent home to give you some ideas to discuss with your child before we meet. Please bring this form with you at your scheduled time.

Since conferences are to be held within a rather short period of time at the end of this first quarter, please make every effort to reply promptly so a conference can be scheduled.

I hope this will be an opportunity for all of us to plan for a happy and successful year.

Sincerely,

- -

(TO BE DETACHED AND RETURNED TO THE TEACHER)

Please check the time you and your child will be able to attend a conference:

DAY:

_____ Nov. 16 after 1:00 p.m. (early dismissal)

_____ Any day after 3:00 p.m.

_____ Other time (day of week _____)

EVENING: Scheduled for working parents only! Please reserve this time for those who cannot attend day conferences.

_____ After 6:30 p.m.

_____ Other time _____

PUPIL'S NAME _____

PARENT'S SIGNATURE _____

45